



The Spirituality of Leadership: Becoming a Conference President - A wonderful way to serve the poor.

(SVdP National Task force in Leadership)

Potential leaders often say, "The reason I joined the Society is to serve the poor": the implication being that becoming a leader will somehow diminish this admirable reason. One might consider the following dialogue:

Potential leader: "I only want to serve poor people".

Experienced Vincentian Leader: "That is admirable. You don't need us, go ahead and serve those in need".

Potential leader: "But where do I get the money to help with the rent and utilities?".

Experienced Vincentian Leader: "Good question. You will need to find some donors".

Potential leader: "But people who donate want to deduct their donations on their taxes."

Experienced Vincentian Leader: "Well, to do that we need to form an organization, specifically a 501(c)(3) organization which includes proper governance and legal guidelines".

Potential leader: "I see. So, then we need leaders of this organization. I am beginning to understand. Then it does take an organization and its leaders to fulfill the mission of serving the poor?".

Experienced Vincentian Leader: "You have said it well. Indeed, an organization's leaders are definitely serving the poor and in no way is a person's desire to serve the poor diminished by the act of leadership".

Organization is essential to serving the poor in a sustainable manner. It then follows that for an organization to succeed it must have good leadership and therefore becoming a leader in the Society is very much involved with growing in holiness and serving the poor. *In order to serve the mission of an organization, the organization is sustained by both its members and its leaders*

Our Identity Statement says we lead “men and women to join together to grow spiritually.” As baptized Catholics, we should all have spiritual growth as a priority in our lives. We are called daily to know, love and seek to imitate Jesus, the ultimate servant leader. He tells us that without Him we can do nothing. As Jesus took Peter, He takes us and, although we can give Him little, He takes what we give and multiplies it as He did with the loaves and fishes. As one assumes the leadership role, Jesus is there to guide and help. Leadership is a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to Jesus and He generously provides.

Consider that *serving as president of the conference provides a different platform from which to enhance a leader’s own spiritual life and allows leaders a unique opportunity to promote spirituality to other Vincentians.* It gives leaders the opportunity to associate with other leaders and develop new friendships while at the same time, sharing common experiences and exchanging ideas.

It also allows leaders to broaden their perspectives and skills, some of which are even transferable to other occupations or vocations. Serving in a leadership position allows a member to gain a greater appreciation of the worldwide network of charity that was the vision of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. If you are considering such a position, it is important to incorporate prayer in your discernment process in order to open yourself to the opportunity and prepare the conference for new leadership.

Leadership in the Society is based on an understanding of our Vincentian vocation and our spirituality. Its success is based on servant leadership and an ability to listen and promote group decisions. The servant leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, and a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society: Will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?

After you have reflected on the above discussion and prayed about how you can serve the Society, let the Holy Spirit lead you. What a wonderful opportunity to increase your service to those in need in our communities.

Reference

Who Me? Why in the World Should I become a Vincentian Leader; SVdP White Paper (Revised March 23, 2016) [svdpusa.org > Members > Documents > Governance in a Box > Governance Initiatives > Item no. 2]